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**engage The Penguin classic**

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# engage

## The Penguin classic



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# The Penguin classic

Penguin Books are a national heritage and have a place in millions of homes. At a time when publishers are struggling, Penguin have discovered that readers can be persuaded to buy new versions of old books, if the designs are seductive enough.

In this edition of engage, we look at the history of their classic logo and some examples of their imaginative book design collections.

## The birth of the Penguin

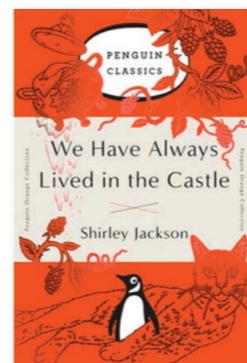
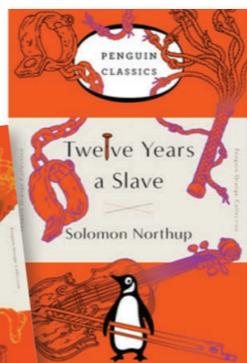
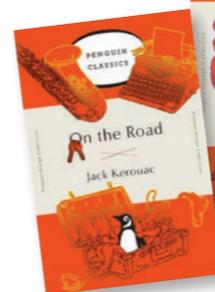
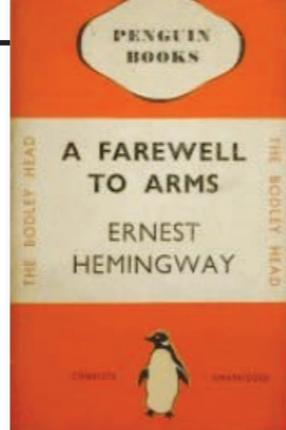
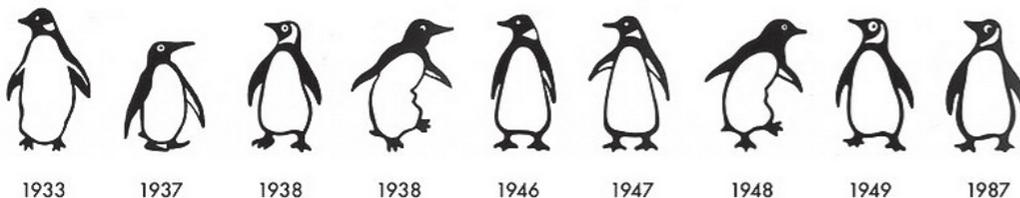
In 2015, Penguin Books celebrated the 80th anniversary of its paperbacks. Allen Lane launched the inexpensive line of ten books back in July 1935, where they were an instant hit.

It started with the simple logo and name, suggested, allegedly, by a typist who was earwiggling the board meeting. Allen had already hit upon the idea of an animal logo, inspired by the template offered by the contemporary publishing house The Albatross Library.

*"It was the obvious answer, a stroke of genius,"* said Penguin's original designer, Edward Young. *"I went straight off to the zoo to spend the rest of the day drawing penguins in every pose."*

While instantly recognisable today, the penguin has gone through a series of changes over the course of 80 years. The look of the bird changed frequently (as you can see, some early versions were quite squiggly), and many times since, with some notable weight losses and gains.

It was refreshed as recently as 2003 by Angus Hyland (right).



## The cover designs

Edward Young was asked to design the covers of the first set of Penguin paperbacks, which appeared in the summer of 1935.

Deeming illustrated covers trashy, Allen insisted on a straightforward jacket design based on a horizontal grid, using bands of colour to signify the genre.

Orange for general fiction, green for crime fiction, cerise for travel and adventure, red for plays, dark blue for biographies and yellow for miscellaneous. Less common were violet for essays and grey for world affairs.

In 1946, Young's amateurish logo was modified by forward-thinking German typographer Jan Tschichold, who was invited by Lane to give Penguin a uniform aesthetic.



## Changes happen

For the 70th anniversary of Penguin Classics, Penguin Random House released a limited-run series of 12 influential American literary classics.

Creative director Paul Buckley was faced with the task of taking the iconic cover design and shaking it up, while ensuring the brand was still recognisable, and without losing the integrity of the original designs that had stood the test of time.

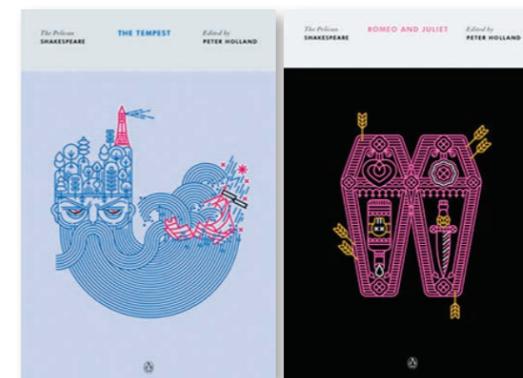
Having seen the work of illustrator Eric Nyquist, Buckley knew that applying his 3D, textured designs to the Penguin Classics would lift and enhance the previously flat design, rather than change it entirely.

## Shakespeare

Marking the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death – a new creative approach was undertaken.

Paul Buckley brought in illustrator Manuja Waldia to reinvigorate the series with her strikingly fresh illustrations. The series won a Gold Medal at the SOI Annual Exhibition (Book category).

Waldia's challenge was to take the theme of each play and represent it in just a single image per volume. She very skilfully intertwined symbolic elements from each plot to create stunningly simple yet detailed illustrations (below).



## Drop Caps

Penguin Drop Caps is a series of 26 collectible hardcover editions of fine works of literature. Each cover featured a specially commissioned illustrated letter of the alphabet by type designer Jessica Hische.

The origins of drop caps date back to the 9th century, when they were used in religious books. They were richly illustrated and painted in bright colours. Each letter represents the surname of the books author. For example, 'A' for Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, 'B' for Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and so on.



## The Penguin Galaxy

*"What we've done over the last several years is actually bring (Penguin's excellent reputation) and the high quality of publishing to many, many different fields, many different categories."* (Elda Rotor)

The Penguin Galaxy is a sci-fi fantasy series featuring incredible cult classics that have never been in a Penguin Classics series before.

Buckley hired typographer Alex Trochut to transform the characters of the works, relying solely on typography. *"They sort of look like the past and future all at one time. Dune might be my favourite... I love how these have this hieroglyphic feel. They're not entirely readable, I sort of like that too."*

